

A Soldiers Fare
Is Rough

Letters From A. Cameron
In The
Indian Territory

Arkansas Campaign, 1862-1864

Alexander Cameron, son of Neill and Elizabeth Campbell Cameron, was born in Moore County, North Carolina, June 17, 1833.¹ In 1853 he moved to Texas, settling in Hunt County where he was elected as County Surveyor in 1858 and County Clerk in 1860. He married Permelia Spradling, daughter of Oliver W. and Jane C. Spradling of Hunt County, on February 22, 1860, and they lived in Greenville, Hunt County, until Cameron joined a group of Texans who formed a Company of cavalry under the command of John W. Marshall. The Company moved to Fort Washita, Chickasaw Nation, where Cameron was enlisted into the Confederate Army on April 4, 1862. He remained in the Indian Territory until the late fall of 1862 when the Company was ordered to Maysville, Arkansas. Remaining in the Fort Smith area for several weeks, Cameron was involved in the Battle of Prairie Grove in December. In February, 1863, he returned to the Indian Territory, and from there was ordered to Louisiana where he was in active service until the fall of 1864 when he returned to Camden, Arkansas. At the close of the war Cameron was with Samuel Bell Maxey's Division at Houston, Texas.²

Cameron's letters to his wife span the entire period of his military service. His first letter from Fort Washita was dated April 14, 1862:³

Dear Wife I avail myself of the present opportunity of writing you a few lines which will inform you that I am in good health and have been ever since I left home We are Still at Ft Washita and I don't know how long we may stay here We arrived here on the 4th day of April and were Sworn in to Service the Same day the health of our company is tolerably good only two or three Sick in camp and they not dangerous I am not able to Say to what Regiment we will be attached it Seems at Present that we are about to be ruled out of the Regiment to which we expected to join We were the eleventh Company that Reported but were the ninth Sworn in to Service and Captain Marshall' became a candidate for Colonel and that was against Bob Taylors' wish Alex-ander' from Shearman was his favorite man for that position and Marshall being the favorite of a majority of the Companies Taylor concluded if Marshall was attached to the regiment he would beat Alexander for Colonel he ordered our Company out of the Regiment or at least Said we Should not go into the organization the Matter has not been decided as yet it is left to General Pike' to decide whether we will

go into there organization or not if we do not go in under the command of General Pike I will write again in a few days I don't know when we will leave this place if we stay here any length of time I will try and come home and stay a few days I have been over to Taylors Regiment and saw all the Boys that were there the most of them are well Some few had the Meesles they are camped Nine miles North East of this place Dr DeJernett is not in the Regiment he was left at North fork with the Sick but he is expected to arrive there in a few days

There was one hundred and Sixty Sick left there I would like very much to see you but that is impossible at this time I have not seen but one woman Since I have been here at that was an Indian She passed through the Fort Yesterday. We are all getting use to camp life I have made Bread Several times I am a tolerably good Cook We get Plenty to Eat Such as we do get Bacon, Flour Sugar & Barley Coffee I want you to write to me as soon as you can and let me know how you are and where you are staying whether you have rented out the place or not and whether you are going to stay at at your Mothers or at Greenville I saw Bob Spencer yes-terday and he is going to start home this Morning and I will send this letter by him I also saw Sam Latimore this Morning he told me he saw you last Tuesday Morning at Mrs DeJernetts and told me you were in good health which was a great Satisfaction to me to hear I will close and write again in a few days I hope you will write as soon as you can I remain your affectionate husband till Death

S/A. Cameron"

In his letter of April 17th, Cameron gave more details of camp life:

Dear Wife Again I avail my self of the present opportunity of writing you again This will inform you that I am in good health and I hope this letter will find you in the enjoyment of the Same the health of our company is tolerably good the Boys are all up at this time We are Still at Ft Washita and I do not know how long we may remain here though I presume we will leave in a few days and go over to General Pikes head Quarters about 9 miles from Ft Washita, and stay there till we are thoroughly

Drilled Captain Jack Marshall is running for Colonel in the new Regiment though we have no vote in it as we were to late getting here to become a part of that Regiment

the Election is now going on and I am not able to tell how it will result he is running against Almer-ine Alexander from Shearman Some think Marshall will be elected and Some think Alexander. I am Satisfied it will be a close Race. We will know what we will have to do in a few days I have command of this place at this time if Marshall gets beat for Colonel he will come back to his Company and We will Elect him again Pikes headquarters is about 9 miles N E from here at Nail's Bridge when he gets his whole Command together he will have about from 12 to 15 Thousand troops there is about 4 Thousand there now and about 18 Pieces of artillery he will have thirty Six Pieces when they all get together Pike is restricting the Soldiers to the Strictest Rule of discipline having any man that is able for duty out either on Camp guard Picket guard Provo guard &c. So that every man is on duty Pike is going to fortify where he is and Stay there long enough to get his Army well drilled Permelia I want to See you very much I have been longer from home now than I ever was and I believe I want to See you as bad as I ever did, but I am not able to tell when I can come home but I will come as Soon as I can I want you to write as Soon as you can and let me know how your health is and where you are Staying and whether you have Rented the place how Bob is getting along, and every thing you can think of that would interest me we have a considerable Bussle and Stir in camps but no difficulty the Boys are all quiet in that Respect Thomps McDonald¹² got in Yesterday and told me he Saw you at McWrights Store and that you were well which gratified me very much Mr Kimbro¹³ is going home and I Send this letter by him let me know if anybody has paid you any money since I left I must close for the present give my Respects to your Mother and all the children to Mrs DeJernett & Children & to Bob I Remain your affectionat Husband till Death good by for this time

S / A. Cameron¹⁴

Cameron was obviously aware of the effort to prevent Marshall's election as Colonel, which was successful. In late April,

Cameron wrote the last extant letter before the end of the summer:

Dear Wife I have just Received and read your kind and affectionate Letter delivered by Mr Gee¹⁵ which found me in the enjoyment of good health and which gratified me to learn that you were in the enjoyment of the Same good blessing which is the greatest blessing of life I have been Some what uneasy about your health for a few days Permelia I would be the gladdest in the world to See you and I hope I shall be permitted to do So before long though I may not get off Soon but I will try to Start Some time about the last of this week but Should I fail to come you Must not dispare try to enjoy yourself the best you can for I would be glad to hear that you are enjoying yourself above anything I could hear from home I have enjoyed myself very well Permelia I think of you often and if it were not for our liberties I could not be hired to Stay from you in this campaign We have Moved out of the Fort and are encamped about one half mile off I do not know whether we will Stay in the vicinity of this place long or not but the Supposition is Now that we will Stay here 4 or 5 months at least We have to Send out Piquet Guard every day and keep out a guard at Ft Washita but our Boys think it fun as Yet and it is as long as the weather keeps good. Taylor's Regiment is Stationed about 8 miles from us I have been over there Several times to See the Boys Mr Gee is here and Starts for home this Morning

you Stated you were not at your Mas Since I left when you write again please tell me where your Pa went I have not heard one word from him Since I left home I am very anxious to hear from Mother I have not heard any thing Since I left We get Plenty to eat here Such as it is and it is good enough if We had Some body to Cook it. But I dont like to Cook very Well the Boys Say I am a good Cook I have made Flour Bread with my hands Several times myself & R. W. Spencer¹⁶ have been doing the Cooking for Several days Some of our Boys are at home and Some are complaining of being Sick though none of them are confined to their tents they are all able to eat and walk about Some Permelia you must write Soon I Received your two first Letters 4 days ago the one you Sent by Turpin¹⁷ was left at Taylors Regiment and I did not get it for several days Kim-

bro brought one I was verry to hear from you before
I Received them I will write again in a few days
give my respects to Mrs DeDernett Eugene
Bardy¹⁸ Bob & All my friends and I hope to See you
Shortly I remain your affectionate husband till
death

S / A. Cameron¹⁹

It is evident that Marshall's Company did not become a
part of Taylor's command, and apparently the Company re-
mained a detached Company for some time. In Gen. Pike's
Return of the Department of Indian Territory for May, 1862,
Captain Marshall's Company was reported with 4 officers, 66
men, and 71 aggregate present, 94 aggregate present and ab-
sent.²⁰ It is possible that Cameron was furloughed during the
summer of 1862 but no record and no reference to such fur-
lough was found.

During the summer and fall a great deal of confusion and
disruption occurred over the command of the Trans-Missis-
sippi and Indian Territory. On May 26, Maj. Gen. T. C.
Hindman was assigned to command the forces in Arkansas
and the Indian Country, by orders of Maj. Gen. P. G. T.
Beauregard, ranking Confederate commander in the West, the
command to be designated as Trans-Mississippi and to com-
prise the states of Missouri and Arkansas, Louisiana north of
the Red River, and the Indian Territory.²¹ On the same date a
general order from the Secretary of War at Richmond an-
nounced the boundaries of the Trans-Mississippi area as em-
bracing the states of Missouri and Arkansas, including the
Indian Territory, the state of Louisiana west of the
Mississippi River, and Texas.²² Hindman assumed command
on May 31, 1862,²³ and immediately a bitter controversy de-
veloped between Pike and Hindman. Pike wrote to Brig. Gen.
John S. Roane on June 1:

Before hearing of any advance on Little Rock, I had
found it necessary to let one half the efficient force of
three regiments here return home to reap the wheat
harvest, which, from the great number of sick, has so
reduced those regiments that they are mere skele-
tons . . . Colonel Taylor has about 300, and Colonel
Alexander about the same, including three detached
companies. The whole infantry and cavalry force
present for duty is less than 1,000 men.²⁴

Pike's complaints against Hindman increased,²⁵ and on June
26, Pike wrote from Fort McCulloch to the Secretary of War
about the lack of supplies and Hindman's actions, adding, "If

you choose to call for copies of Major-General Hindman's general orders you will readily discover why it will be impossible for me to consent to remain here long if every movement I make is to be dictated by him."²⁶ Hindman wad demoted when special orders from Richmond, dated July 16, 1862, assigned the command to Maj. Gen. Theophilus H. Holmes.²⁷ Meanwhile, on June 30, Pike ordered Marshall's Company into the Wichita Mountains:

Capt. Marshall's Company of Texas Cavalry will proceed to the Wichita Mountains, on the head of Clear Creek, or a branch of Cache Creek, in the valley, at the foot of Mt. Beaugard, heretofore known as Mt. Scott, the highest peak of the mountains. The dept. quartermaster will furnish them mechanics and laborers; and he will erect 2 block-houses, of 2 stories each, loop-holed, and the upper story projecting at different angles beyond the lower one; and also a commissary warehouse and any other necessary building. The command will take with it 100 rounds of ammunition per man and 60 days provisions. Capt. John W. Marshall will command all troops in the Reserve, and guard the Texas frontier against depredations, while taking care that no unprovoked wrongs be done the Reserve or wild Indians. He will grant no furloughs or leaves of absence whatever for any cause; and he may receive additional men, and when the number is sufficient, muster into and retain at that post an additional company. The post thus established will be called Camp Alexander.²⁸

Shortly after this order, on July 20, Pike submitted his resignation and requested leave of absence, and enclosed to the Secretary of War copies of some of his own reports as well as orders from Hindman, emphasizing the seriousness of the situation in the Indian Territory.²⁹ Cameron's letter of September 11 was from Fort Washita and gave no indication that he had been home during the summer:

My Dear Wife it is with More than ordinary feelings of pleasure I write to you this morning feeling the ties of love and affections toward you my Dear wife I received your Kind letter of the 7th Inst last Night and hasten to answer the Same Your Letter found me in the Enjoyment of good health and I was truly glad it left you enjoying the Same good blessing for there is Nothing that affords me as

much Satisfaction as to get a letter from you and to hear that you are enjoying good health it is true I have not been absent from you as long as Some have been from their companions but this is the longest period we have been Separated Since we were Married and I am ready to acknowledge that it is the greatest cross of my life to be in this Situation but when I think of what Stimulates Southerners to enter the field to leave their homes and families I then become reconciled there is Nothing but Independence and Southern rights that would induce me to leave you of whom I love So well Dear Permelia I was very Sorry to hear that Bob had rented our house to Gee he done it without any authority from me whatever I had rather the House was unoccupied than by them for Gee Never does pay his Debts and I expect they will damage the place their Boys are So bad I was very glad you did not let Mrs Gee have your Stove and I want you to Send them word Not to Cook in the House I want you to tell your Pah to See Bob the first time he goes to Town and See if Canisler³⁰ paid over the amount of Percent I was entitled to from Austin if he has I want him to pay it over to you and you can use it as you wish Dear Permelia I wish I could See you this Morning in Stead of writing but that is impossible and I am thankful for the Invention of writing for it Superceeds the Necessity of visiting when we wish to communicate our thoughts and affections to each other when Separated as we frequently are Dear Permelia when I wrote to you before I told you that I thought I would come home to See you at a certain time but things have changed Some what and I dont know now whether I can come or not but I will use every effort to come that is within my Power Captain Marshall recd orders a few days ago to Not furnish any of his men for more than one day and I do not know how I am to get off without going without leave I am coming if I can but if I do not and cant get off I will write you again Write Soon I Remain your affectionate Husband

S/A. Cameron³¹

Fort Washita C. N.
Friday Morning 10 o'clock A.M Sept 19th 1862

Mrs Permella A. Cameron

My Dear wife again I resume my pen in hand to write you a few lines this leaves me in good health

I recd your kind and affectionate Letter and its contents with my yarn vest a few days ago I was truly glad to hear that you were in good health that is a great Satisfaction to me to hear that you are enjoying good health if I am not Permitted to See you I will try and come to See you before we leave here

if I possibly can we are getting ready to Move but I think it will Some 12 or 15 days before we all can get off Mr Lowrie² of McCamants³ Co Starts home in a few minutes he will carry this letter and you can Send an answer by him when he returns he will tell you about what time he will come back be contented the best you can My Dear wife I will use all the Means in my Power to come to See you before I leave here I have No time to write for Mr Lowry is Now waiting for my letter give my respects to all the family I Remain as ever your affectionate Husband till Death

S/ A. Cameron⁴

Fort Washita C N
September 27th 1862 Friday Evening

Mrs Permella A. Cameron
South Sulphur Texas

My Dear wife it is with great Pleasure that I resume my pen in hand to write you a few lines which will inform you that I am in good health and I truly hope this may find you enjoying the Same

I wrote to you last Friday and Sent the Letter by Wm Lowry and he promised me he would go by and give you the Letter and that when he Started back he would come by and bring me an answer but he did neither though I presume you got the Letter I am very anxious to get a letter from you Thompson McDonald Received a letter from his Sister and She Said that Hugh Dugan⁵ and Jane Anderson⁶ were both dead and that Thomps wife was very Sick he Starts home to night and he has agreed to go by and take this letter to you and you must try and Send me

another in a few days we will be ready to leave here in about 7 or 8 days and as I said before I will come home if it is within my Power to do So before we get off though if I Should fail to come and any thing goes wrong you must by all means Send for me I would be the gladest in the world to go this evening with Thomps but he goes without leave of absence from his Captain and that is what I dont wish to do unless in a case of emergency I have but little time to write now Thomps is about Ready to Start Capt Marshall was over to See General Pike the other day and he to told the Captain that he was commissioned a Major General and that if he was assigned to the command of this Country here that he would keep his Company here this winter he recd his Commission but had not recd his orders but were looking for them every day So we may not get very far before we are ordered back even if we Start Dear Fernelia you must take the very best of care of your Self and do nothing that might injure you in any way if you have any chance at all try and Send me an answer though I hope I will get to See you in a few days I will close as Thomps is waiting I Remain your affectionate Husband till Death

S / A. Cameron³⁷

Cameron did not get a furlough, and as the time approached for the birth of their child, he became more concerned. His last letter from Fort Washita was dated October 2:

My Dear wife I avail myself of the present opportunity of addressing you this morning with a few lines I am well and I would be exceedingly joyful to know that you are doing well. I have no Idea that you are well at this time but I am truly in hopes that you Soon may be I am very uneasy about you at this time I See no pleasure and would give almost any thing that I could be with you but all my efforts to do So has failed I done evry thing in my power to get to come but to leave without leave of absence and be reported to Head Quarters and that I hated to do when I found I could not get to come I concluded I would make my Poney Runaway and then I could get leave to hunt for her and accordingly on Sunday Night I found a horse that had been trying to runaway for Some time and I got the man to unhobble him that night and I turned mine loose with

him and on monday morning they were gone I thought then I would get to hunt them and come home but alas on Monday Morning Capt Marshall got a letter from Bonham requesting him and Dick Spencer to come there immediately and when I went to get leave to hunt my Poney he informed me that he had got Said letter and that I must Stay with the Company and detail Some person to hunt my horse our 3rd Lieutenant being Sick in the Hospital I was then completely wound up I had no other Means to resort to and had to give up coming which was a very hard thing for me to do My Dear I am almost Miserable and will be till I hear from you I have not heard a word from you Since the 14th day of Sept which Seems to me to be two Months I Still think though if any thing was wrong your Father would Send for me that gives me Some consolation My Dear this is one of the trials of life and very hard to bear but the time has come when we are not our own and must do only as we are bid it Seems very hard for free men but nevertheless it is right in the Present crises Thompsons McDonald promised me he would go and come by your House and I look for him about friday night I Shall be in Suspence till he gets here My Dear I will write again in a few days Nute Marshall³⁸ is here to day he is well I will close hoping this letter will find you enjoying as good health a the circumstances of the case would admit

Dear Pernelia good By

S / A. Cameron

My Dear after I had closed my letter I Received your kind and affectionate Letter which gave me much Satisfaction Your affectionate Husband

S / A. Cameron³⁹

Within a week, orders from Gen. Holmes, after recommendation from Gen. Hindman, were issued that the various Texas Companies under Capt. Marshall and Capt. Martin, and others, at or near Forts Washita and McCulloch who were not needed in that region were to march within forty-eight hours to Maysville, Arkansas, and any other detached companies were ordered to join Marshall's Company and move with him.⁴⁰ As Marshall's Company moved toward Arkansas, the conflict between Gen. Pike and Gen. Hindman worsened. Pike

had resumed command of the Indian Territory temporarily on October 23, having been advised that his resignation had not been accepted.⁴¹ In late November he wrote to Secretary of War George W. Randolph that the Indian Country was lost, and that the responsibility lay with Hindman and Holmes.⁴² On November 3, Gen. Hindman issued orders to find and arrest Pike,⁴³ and later that month Gen. Pike wrote to President Davis from Warren, Texas, that he was a prisoner there, and included charges against Gen. Holmes.⁴⁴ By early December Cameron was at Van Buren, Arkansas, presumably with one of the groups under the command of Hindman. In the *Report of the Organization of the Army of the Trans-Mississippi Department*, dated December 12, Gen. Hindman's First Corps included the commands of Bass, Stevens, Guess, Alexander, and Eitter.⁴⁵ Cameron participated in the Battle of Prairie Grove, and although his military record shows he was "Commander of Marshall's Squadron" and listed in the number of men engaged in Col. W. P. Lane's Regiment, Texas Partisan Rangers, commanded by Lt. Col. R. P. Crump, his letter states that "we are in McDonalds Brigade."⁴⁶ Cameron's letter of December 11 from Van Buren gives a vivid description of the engagements of the previous week:

My Dear wife as I Stated to you in my other Letter⁴⁷ that we were ordered to Start to hunt the feds we Started from Camps about 7 o'clock Wednesday Morning the 3rd Inst and kept Moving North Slowly till Saturday Night at 2 o'clock we were ordered to March in Double quick and from that till day we were under full Speed till we Reached within the vicinity of the feds we then Marched Slowly for an hour till the head of our column came in Sight of the Federals a charge was ordered and here we went through fields and woods till we Reached their Train a Round was fired and we killed three of their men and wounded two they wounded two of our men Right here we captured about 30 Wagons & two pieces of Artillery and Some Prisoners the most of them had Skedaddled we followed on and kept ketching them for about 4 miles till we had Run them back to the line of their Infantry we there formed in line of Battle and Sent our Spies But Soon found they were too Strong for us they fired one Round at us but only wounded one man we were then ordered back we fell back and gathered up all that the feds had thrown off in their flight which was no Little the Road was Strown with Blankets Over-coats Saddles Sabres 6 Shooters & guns of all Sorts

KnapSacks haverbacks Hats Capts Boots Shoes & all Such things these things were all collected and taken back to the Train by this time our Infantry & the balance of our cavalry had come up the Number of Prisoners taken in this dash was 250 one Major & ten other commissioned Officers this Break commenced alittle after Sun up the Number we had in this charge was about 800 men 450 in our Regiment (W. P. Lanes from Texas) and 350 of Col McDonalds' Missouri Brigade our Artillery by this time had all come up and we Planted two Batteries the Enemy about this time had advanced with their Artillery & Infantry and the Artillery Ball then opened about 9 o'clock we were ordered on the left wing of our army we took aposition their but they Soon found us out and of all the Shelling that ever was done Men that had been in battle before Said this was the most Severe the Cannon Balls & Bomb Shells was a thick as hail Seemingly the cannonading was kept up and about 2 o'clock in the evening the Small Arms let Loose & from that time till dark it was a continual Roar of Small arms & Artillery Both holding their Position till just before they quit our men had driven them back on all Parts of the field after the Battle closed the Infantry were marched out to a large cornfield and built their fires and eat their Suppers the cavalry were ordered to hold their Position about 2 houres in the Night our Brigade was ordered to move we Started and No body knew where we Started in the Direction of Cain's Hill directly we took another direction & fell in to the Road we had come up about 4 miles from the Battle field we were there halted and ordered to Stay in line & about 12 o'clock that night the Infantry & Artillery began to Pass us they all passed and we were left in the Rear the cause of our Retreat was not known but was Supposed to be in consequence of the Enemy Receiving large Reinforcements about dark the Supposition is there was about 18000 on each Side & that they Received Reinforcements of 12000 that night the truth of this I am not able to vouch for one thing I do know the feds fought well they did not attempt to follow us and I hardly think they will for there is nothing to subsist an army on between here & where they are the Battle was fought 8 miles North of Cane Hill Washington County on the Fayetteville Road Genl Hindemans⁵⁰ was the Genl commanding we only lost

three men killed & 11 wounded in our Regiment
 MySelf & Lieut Spencer⁵¹ with 23 men was all there
 was from our company one of our Boys Hugh A.
 Smith⁵² was Seriously wounded in the Shoulder by a
 Musket Ball he was Sent to the Hospital he lived
 6 miles East of Greenville it was a tolerably hot
 Place & no mans life was Safe there it was different
 music from any I had ever heard but I thought I
 could Stand it as long as any other on the field
 our loss was put up at 200 killed and about 400
 wounded and theirs about 3 times as great Hind-
 mans Official Report has not been made yet and I
 dont know whether this is correct or not⁵³ we got
 here last Night and I dont know how long we will
 Stay here we may be ordered off in two hours there
 is no telling what our Movements will be we had a
 tolerable hard trip up three days and nights without
 any thing to eat for man or Horse though I am in
 good health there is Several of the Boys Sick Some
 tolerably bad off I Saw the boys in Stevens⁵⁴ Regi-
 ment they were not in the fight they were held
 back as a reserve the whole Texas Brigade and Sev-
 eral others it is Sure we whiped them while we
 fought and it was the full calculation of all that I
 Saw that night after the Battle that we had whiped
 them and that we would Renew the Battle next
 Morning if they were there the Missourians were
 Rejoicing to think that they had Some Prospect of
 getting back to their own State but when they were
 ordered back they Seemed considerably down in the
 mouth the Missourians fought Nobly Dear Per-
 melia I would be glad I could be at Home with you
 and Little Lura I think of you and her a great deal
 but I See no Prospect at the Present of getting to
 come home there is no furloughs at all granted in
 the army at this time though it may be possible that
 I will have opportunity before Spring I would be
 glad to hear from you now as I know I cant See you
 though I expect the chance for Sending Letters here
 will be tolerably bad Dear Permelia I want you to
 compose yourself the very best you can I know this
 is a trying time on all both men and women but
 women and children in Texas where you are are See-
 ing fine times compared with what they are here
 where the Armys are travelling for I can just tell you
 that women & children from here to Fayetteville are
 bound to Suffer if they Stay there for the army

North and South have taken every thing they have to eat and burnt their fences &c the country looks desolate above all things keep an army out of the country where my family lives for I have Seen enough on this March to Satisfy me they would even go in to the yard and kill hogs where they had only one and take the last Ear of corn the last bundle of Fodder Wheat or oats and in fact every thing that a man or Horse can eat not withstanding the entreaties of the women & children that is caused by having nothing to Subsist an Army upon and men will eat if it can be got the Northern Army is much worse on our People because they take every thing they want to eat and destroy the balance I talked with Some of the Prisoners that we Took and they Said they were tired of the war but did not Say how long they thought it would continue Dear Pernelia I have written all that I can write on this Paper I will write again the 1st chance Kiss Lura for me give my Respects to all & try to go to Fathers & Let them hear from me I Remain your affectionate Husband till Death

S / A. Cameron⁶⁵

Col. MacDonald's command had been involved in a skirmish on December 6 near Fayetteville when his men surrounded a detachment under Maj. Bredett,⁶⁶ but there is no way of knowing whether Cameron was with MacDonald at that time, nor is it known how long he remained with this regiment, although apparently he left it shortly after the engagements at Cane Hill and Prairie Grove, because MacDonald moved to Lewisburg in late December and on January 9 in an engagement at Marsfield, MacDonald was killed.⁶⁷ The United States Army occupied Van Buren on December 28,⁶⁸ but Cameron remained with the Confederate forces in the Fort Smith area until at least mid-January, 1863.⁶⁹ From Camp Spake, fifteen miles south of Fort Smith, Cameron wrote his wife:

My Dear wife it has only been 11 days Since I wrote to you⁶⁰ but this being a llesure time and I have an opportunity to Send you a letter I avail myself of the opportunity we have been here now Fight days and these Fight days have as Rough weather as I ever Saw in any Country we have had three Rains and two Snows Since we Stopped here though I am in hopes the weather will Moderate now I understand

we will leave here tomorrow I have never Seen as deep Snow as this in Texas

Dear Permelia this leaves me in good health and I truly hope this will find you and Lura together with all the family enjoying the Same good blessing I am not learned for certain where we will Stop but from all I can learn we will move back towards Red River we have had a tolerably hard time Since we have been here to procure Subsistance and in fact we had to press a great deal of it at that it could not be bought and that was our last resort My opinion is that we will have a tolerably hard time in getting through for Provision is very Sceaure all through this Country and I expect it is not much better in Texas a Soldiers fare is rough but they must have Something to eat or an army cant exist Flour Salt and Pork are three things that are very hard to procure I have heard two Dollars a Pint offered for Salt in Camps and it cant be got at that Permelia I have Some good News about Martin D. Hart¹ I will relate the circumstance the evening we got here it was raining and had been all day and we had a rear Guard of about 25 men behind all our train and the command about the time the command stoped to camp the rear Guard was about 3 miles in the rear they were Marching along and I expect carelessly and let their guns get wet when in about 2 1/2 miles of camps Martin D. Hart with about 25 men ran up on them and Demanded their Surrender they know- ing the condition of their guns offered no resistance they Surrendered and he disarmed them and gave them Paroles after Swearing them that they would not take up arms againt the United States till prop- erly exchanged & Signed his name as Capt com- manding Co. A. 1st Texas Regiment United States Army about night our Paroled Boys got in and we were here five Regiments of Infantry and no cavalry but they hunted around through the Regiments and got about 40 horses and Started after them but it was raining So hard and they had about 4 hours the Start & the night very dark our Boys could make no Discovery they returned the next day we Sent to Fort Smith for Col Crumps² Cavalry & about 12 o'clock that day it commenced Snowing & Snowed all the day & night and about half the next Crump & his men about 120 came down and got after Martin through the Mountains & on the 18th overhauled him with 40 of his men he is now in

Fort Smith in Prison I have not Seen him but I have Seen a great many that did See him he had two citizens killed in the Country because they had been Strong Secessionists his capture caused great rejoicing in camps I dont know what they will do with him Dear Permelia I think I will get to come home when we stop I want to see you very much I have not heard from you in two months I will write again Soon good by for the Present

S/A. Cameron

Kiss Lura for me give my Respects to all the family Since writing the within Letter I have Seen Isam Latimore⁶³ who just returned from Fort Smith and States that he Saw M. D. Hart hung & cut down Also his 2nd Lieutenant they were hung yesterday Morning that is a good joke

S/A. Cameron⁶⁴

This phase of the northwestern Arkansas campaign saw the retreat of the Confederate forces, some towards Little Rock,⁶⁵ and Cameron with a group who moved into the Indian Territory. In mid-February Cameron wrote from Camp Kiamitia:

My Dear wife I again avail myself of the Present opportunity of addressing a few lines this leaves me in good health and I truly hope it will reach you and Lura together with all the family Enjoying the Same good blessing Dear Permelia I want to See you Very bad and Seeing all the other Boys going home Makes me feel very restless I hope I will be able to get off in a Short time but dont look for me for certain till the 10 or 15th of March though I will get off Sooner if I can I may have to Stay till R. W. Spencer returns if So it will be the 10 or 15th before I can get off I am going to make an application about the 1st of Next Week if the Money comes we are looking for it in a day or two I had much rather get money before I leave if I Should get my money Next Week I will then apply for leave of absence if you See any person coming up and your little Poney is Sufficient for me to Ride I would you Send him to me Mr Grant⁶⁶ & Crawford Simpson⁶⁷ & Several others are expected back Soon they could bring him you may look for me the 1st chance I get give my

Respects to all the family and you and Lura accept
the Same good By till I See you which I think will
be Soon I Remain your affectionate Husband till
Death

S/A. Cameron⁶⁸

Cameron was furloughed February 21, 1863, for sixty days, after which he returned to Camp Kiamitia for a short time before he was ordered to Louisiana. At this time he was First Lieutenant of Co. H, Hawpe's Regiment Texas Cavalry (Dis-mounted), a position he maintained through the rest of the war.⁶⁹ He was involved in the Louisiana campaign until the fall of 1864 when he returned to the area around Camden, Arkansas.⁷⁰ His brief sojourn in Arkansas was almost over, but the future was less bright than he foresaw when he wrote to his wife:

My Dear Wife and Daughter I am once more permitted to address you this will inform you that I am in good health at this time and I hope this Letter will find you both together with all the family in the enjoyment of the Same good blessing I have not heard from you in a good while the last Letter I got was dated Sept 6th I received that at Montecello on the 27th day of Sept I do not know why I have not gotten a letter before now it Seems that it has been time the mail has not been regular I expect I wrote to you on the 13th⁷¹ while at Camp Bragg we left there the day I wrote and came to this camp We have been fortifying here ever Since and probably will continue to do So for Some considerable longer I do not know how long all the army of this district is here except Some of the Cavalry who are in front all are fortifying around Camden I think for no purpose but probably they will be needed the Yankees have not made any attempt to advance and I hardly think they will for they have not got force enough and it is very doubtful about their being able to reinforce we have a great many more troops here than they have and if they wait till Winter Sets in then they can not travel for the Roads will be to bad I do not think that there will be any more fighting on this Side of the River during this fall and Winter and I am very much in hopes that by the time the Spring Campaign Would open that there will be a Settlement made and no more fighting required I am Strong in that opinion for it

Seems that the North have Seen Sufficiently to Satisfy them that they had better quit fighting that they have never accomplished any part of the object for which they commenced the war we have heard very good news from the other Side of the River a few days ago Ist that Genl Lee at Richmond Va Whiped Genl Grants yankee army worse than they ever have been whiped and drove them back Grant attacked Lees whole line with the full assurance of taking the place by Storm but as usual he was defeated and driven back and old Pickaune Butler was killed⁷² We also have the News that Genl Hood has gotten in the rear of Shearman at Atlanta Georgia and had torn up the Rail Road and cut off his Supplies and that Shearman was falling back⁷³ on the Strength of the News Genl Magruder⁷⁴ had 50 Rounds fired day before yesterday also that Genl Price⁷⁵ has taken Jefferson City Missouri Permelia I Stated to you in my last Letter that I had Sent up my Resignation and thought probably that if my Papers were Successful that I would be at home in a month from that time but alas they came back disapproved a few days I Still intend to Send them up again but it may be 2 or 3 weeks before I will do it the Col of the Regiment Says if I Resign he will conscript me but I will resk it I hope I will get a Letter from you Soon kiss Lura for me give my Respects to all the family & accept my Love and best wishes for your Self I am as ever your affectionate Husband till Death

S / A. Cameron⁷⁶

Cameron's optimism about the war was unjustified, but he remained with his Company through the closing months of the war. His last letter, dated May 9, 1865, was from Maxey's Division at Houston, Texas.⁷⁷ He was to return to his beloved family at last.

NOTES

1. Family Bible. Interview Notes, Ms. Hazel Caldwell. A biographical sketch of Cameron is found in *Biographical Souvenir of the State of Texas, Containing Biographical Sketches of the Representative Public, and Many Early Settled Families* (Chicago: F. A. Battey and Company, 1889), 148-151.
2. A. Cameron Letters, 1862-1865, in possession of Ms. Hazel Caldwell.

A. Cameron Military Records, Civil War, Confederate Archives.

3. The original spelling and punctuation have been retained.
4. John W. Marshall. In the attempt to identify residents of Hunt County mentioned in Cameron's letters, the information is taken from *Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1860* (Hunt County), hereafter referred to as *Census Returns, 1860*. Marshall was 44 years of age, a farmer and native of Tennessee, with combined real estate and personal property holdings of slightly over \$10,000. He and his wife, Anne C., and their eleven children lived in the Tidwell Creek area of Hunt County.
5. Col. Robert H. Taylor. *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 821. Hereafter cited as *Official Records*.
6. Col. Almarine Alexander. *Ibid.*
7. Gen. Albert Pike. Pike was placed in command of the Indian Territory by orders from the Secretary of War, Confederate States, dated November 22, 1861. *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, 690; vol. XIII, 978. He began his organization immediately, but on December 25 wrote to Secretary of War Judah P. Benjamin of the great problems facing the Indian Territory and expressed hopes of obtaining the necessary items for effective organization. *Ibid.*, vol. VIII, 697; 699; 719-722. Pike had been ordered into northern Arkansas by Gen. Earl Van Dorn in March, 1862, and on March 22, Gen. Sterling Price from his Van Buren, Arkansas, headquarters of the Trans-Mississippi Department, wrote to Pike that he understood that several cavalry regiments were then on the march from Texas to join that army, and he directed Pike to assume command of two of them, the others being directed to join the army via Little Rock. *Ibid.*, 763; 764; 795; 798. On April 15, 1862, Gen. Pike, from Ft. McCulloch, Indian Territory, reported that he had at that post two regiments of Texas mounted men, under Col. Taylor and Alexander, one company of the same and one from Arkansas with the Nineteenth Regiment, and one company of Infantry. *Ibid.*, vol. XIII, 821.
8. Dr. Reuben DeJernett, age 36, physician, with combined real estate and personal property of \$11,100.00. A native of South Carolina, with his wife, Anz F., age 25, native of Georgia, a son, Eugene C., age 3, born in Alabama, and Warren B., age 1, born in Texas. *Census Returns, 1860*. Dr. DeJernett (also spelled De Jernette) enlisted in Texas December 14, 1862, and was mustered in at Ft. Washita on December 18, 1862. He was the regimental surgeon of Co. D, 22nd Cavalry (Texas), Taylor's Regiment Texas Mounted Rifles. He was described as 5'10" tall, with black hair and dark eyes and complexion. His horse was valued at \$180.00 and the rigging at \$40.00. Reuben DeJernett Military Records, Civil War, Confederate Archives.
9. Possibly Richard W. Spencer, age 30, a merchant with property evaluated at \$4,200.00, living in Greenville in the household of Mr. McWright, and native of Tennessee. *Census Returns, 1860*.
10. Isham Latimer. Martin D. Hart Military Records, Civil War, National Archives.
11. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, April 14, 1862.
12. Thompson T. McDonald, of Greenville, was a farmer, a native of Mississippi, and 20 years of age. His wife, 18, was born in Kentucky. *Census Returns, 1860*. Cameron mentioned "Bob" several times, but efforts to identify him have been unsuccessful. It is possible that this was Bob Spencer. See fn. 9.
13. Possibly Jos. Kimbro, age 42, 1st Sgt. in Co. G, Beat 1, Hunt County, 14th Brig. Texas State Troops, enlisted July 6, 1861. *Texas Confederate Index* (Dallas: Microfilm Center, n.d. Originals at North Texas State University, Denton, Texas).
14. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, April 17, 1862.
15. There were two families named Gee in Hunt County in 1860. James H. Gee, a clerk, age 61; his wife, Anne W., and 4 sons and 1 daughter. William G. Gee, age 54; his wife, Mary, and 5 sons and 2 daughters. *Census Records, 1860*. See A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, September 11, 1862.
16. See fn. 9.

17. Possibly William M. Turpin, age 35, ocuist, and native of Kentucky. *Census Returns, 1860*.
18. Unable to identify.
19. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, April 28, 1862.
20. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 831.
21. *Ibid.*, 28. Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), 38.
22. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 841.
23. *Ibid.*, 29.
24. *Ibid.*, 935.
25. *Ibid.*, 848-851; 856; 847-48.
26. *Ibid.*, 841.
27. *Ibid.*, 855. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River*, 48-49.
28. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 953.
29. *Ibid.*, 860-69.
30. Possibly Marcus H. Cansler, one of the commanding officers of Co. H, 34th Texas Regiment Cavalry. *Texas Confederate Index*.
31. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, September 11, 1862. The "certain time" to which he referred was obviously the following month when their child was expected.
32. William E. Lowry, age 21, native of Tennessee, in household of William M. Lowry, age 60, and Elizabeth Lowry, age 57. Martha Lowry, age 18, was listed in the same household but it is not clear whether she was his wife or his sister. *Census Returns, 1860*.
33. It is probable that this was one of the Companies from Hunt County, in which case the reference is probably to James M. McCamant, age 28, farmer, native of Virginia. John D. McCamant, clerk, age 25, native of Virginia, and Alexander McCamant, age 31, farmer, native of Virginia, were also Hunt County residents. *Census Returns, 1860*. J. M. McCamant was 3rd Lieut. in an Infantry Company under the command of Capt. B. D. Martin which was formed in 1863. Ethel Cassles, "A History of Hunt County," (M. A. Thesis, The University of Texas, 1935), 53.
34. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, September 19, 1862.
35. Hugh Dugan, age 22, farmer, native of Kentucky; his wife, Cintha, age 16, born in Texas; and their son, George H., age 1, born in Texas. *Census Returns, 1860*.
36. No one named Jane Anderson was found on the *Census Returns, 1860*.
37. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, September 27, 1862.
38. Newton Marshall, of Greenville, age 21, native of Tennessee; in household of Elizabeth Keith, age 65, and Margaret Marshall, age 45. Also in the household were Jasper Marshall, age 22, and Delilah Marshall, age 21. *Census Returns, 1860*.
39. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, October 2, 1862. Their daughter, Laura Lee, was born October 9.
40. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 895; 896. The orders were from the Headquarters of the District of Arkansas, and dated October 8.
41. *Ibid.*, 924.
42. *Ibid.*, 927.
43. *Ibid.*, 923; 980. The action was to be taken secretly.
44. *Ibid.*, 921-922.
45. *Ibid.*, 903.
46. Cameron Military Records. If Cameron was with this unit on November 29, Lt. Col. R. P. Crump, with Lane's regiment of Texas men, about 600 effective strong, was ordered to Gen. Marmaduke at Oliver's Store near Ft. Smith. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXII, pt. 1, 899. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, December 11, 1862. Gen. Hindman reported on October 16 that he was at Fayetteville and that four regiments of Texas cavalry under Col. Bass were in the area nine miles above Fayetteville on the road to Elkhorn. The troops were disorganized and alarmed at reports of the approach of Federal troops. Hindman ordered Col. Bradford, who was with him at the time, to assume command of Bass's forces and get them in order. Gen. Marmaduke was to command the brigades of Shelby and Bradford, who became ill and

- gave up the command without reporting it, and was replaced by Col. Jesse L. Cravens. *Ibid.*, vol. XIII, 46-51. On October 29, Gen. Samuel R. Curtis, U.S.A., reported on action at Oxford Bend, White River, near Fayetteville, in which Brig. Gen. Herron attacked four miles east of Fayetteville a rebel force of 3,000 commanded by Col. Cravens. In a sharp engagement lasting an hour, the rebels were routed, leaving camp equipage, a few wagons, and other supplies, and were pursued into the Boston Mountains for several miles by Gen. Herron. *Ibid.*, 344-345.
47. Not found.
48. Emmet MacDonal. On November 12, Brig. Gen. James G. Blunt, U.S.A., reported that Col. Cloud had come upon a force of provost guards, 300 strong, between Fayetteville and Cane Hill, under the command of the "notorious Emmet MacDonal" who had fled across the Boston Mountains, and that Col. Cloud had chased them within eighteen miles of Van Buren. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XIII, 358. It is not known if Cameron was with MacDonal at that time.
49. Cane Hill. A description of the area is given in Gen. Hindman's Report. *Ibid.*, vol. XXII, pt. I, 138-146.
50. Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman, commanding First Corps, Trans-Mississippi Army. *Ibid.*, 138.
51. Probably R. W. Spencer. See fn. 9.
52. Hugh A. Smith, of Greenville, age 28, a farmer and native of Tennessee; his wife, Mary A., age 23; Sarah E., age 7, John, age 5, Polly C., 3; and Rachael L., age 1, all born in Tennessee. *Census Returns, 1860*. Smith enlisted as a private in Co. H on July 20, 1862, at Ft. Washita. He was furnished through July, 1863, and absent without leave after July 24, 1863. Hugh A. Smith Military Records, Civil War, Confederate Archives.
53. Hindman's report is in *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXII, pt. I, 138-146. Marmaduke's report, which includes actions by MacDonald's command is in *Ibid.*, 146-148. See *Ibid.*, 154-156 for MacDonald's report. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River*, 85-112.
54. James G. Stevens.
55. A. Cameron to Parnell Cameron, December 11, 1862.
56. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXII, pt. I, 113.
57. *Ibid.*, 196; 207-211.
58. Gen. James G. Blunt reported, "The Stars and Stripes now wave in triumph over Van Buren," on December 28. *Ibid.*, 168. Hindman's report on the loss of Van Buren is found in *Ibid.*, 171-173.
59. A. Cameron to Parnell Cameron, January 22, 1863.
60. Not found.
61. Martin D. Hart, a Greenville lawyer and native of Indiana; his wife Mary, a native of Missouri; and five children. Hart's total property valuation was \$25,000.00. *Census Returns, 1860*. See also William E. Sawyer, "Martin Hart, Civil War Guerrilla," *Texas Military History*, III (1963), 146-153; J. S. Duncan, "'Martin Hart, Civil War Guerrilla': Addenda," *Military History of Texas and the Southwest*, XI (1973), 137-142.
62. Lt. Col. R. P. Crump. Hindman's report on the post-Prairie Grove activity showed Crump located at Dripping Springs, nine miles north of Van Buren. *Official Records*, ser. I, vol. XXII, pt. I, 171-173.
63. Isham Latimer. See fn. 10.
64. A. Cameron to Parnell Cameron, January 22, 1863.
65. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River*, 112.
66. Possibly Wyatt Grant, age 27, teamster, native of Tennessee. *Census Returns, 1860*.
67. Crawford Simpson, of Greenville, a carpenter, age 22, and native of Kentucky. *Census Returns, 1860*.
68. A. Cameron to Parnell Cameron, February 18, 1863.
69. Cameron Military Records. Trezevant C. Hawpes (also Hawpe) was Colonel of the 31st Texas Cavalry Regiment (Dismounted). Marcus J. Wright, comp., and Harold B. Simpson, ed., *Texas in the War 1861-1865* (Hillboro, Texas: The Hill Junior College Press, 1965), 28.
70. A. Cameron to Parnell Cameron, October 22, 1864.
71. Not found.

72. This undoubtedly refers to the failure of Grant's campaign against Petersburg in June and July, 1864, which left Richmond in Confederate possession for the time. B. F. Butler may have been disgraced, but Cameron was mistaken in believing him killed. See J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Civil War and Reconstruction* (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1961), 421-424.
73. Accounts of the Atlanta campaign involving Gen. John Bell Hood and Sherman are found in Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman Fighting Prophet* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1958), 355-434, and Earl Schenck Miers, *The General Who Marched to Hell: William Tecumseh Sherman and his March to Fame and Infamy* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1951), 131-162. The reports received by Cameron were belated and overly-optimistic, at least according to the letter to his wife.
74. Gen. John B. Magruder was transferred to the District of Arkansas August 17, 1864. Wright and Simpson, *Texas in the War 1861-1865*, 203.
75. An account of Price's raid is found in Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River*, 140-154.
76. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, October 22, 1864.
77. A. Cameron to Permelia Cameron, May 9, 1865.

